



SIGNIFICANT ROLE OF LANDSCAPE PAINTING IN RAJASTHANI MINIATURE PAINTING

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ABSTRACT

Rajasthani art has been an integral part of Indian miniature painting on which foreign art could never cast its shadow. This pure native form of art is based upon vibrant Indian poetic version and literature. It is an aesthetic portrayal more of notation rather than of realism. The prime themes of these paintings have been *Baramasa*, *Ragamala* series and legend of Radha-Krishna. The landscape delineation has been of prime importance along with the portrayal of hero and heroine. *Baramasa* (different seasons in twelfth months) is a delineation of diverse seasons chiefly based on landscape. The artist has aesthetically delineated sentiments of lovers by fusing them with natural beauty of every month. Similarly paintings based on *Ragamala* (garland of melodies) and other vernacular themes, landscape has converted a poetic environment into a dynamic one. *Ragamala* is a visual ocular denotation of Indian classical modes which were initially proffered by the poets and musicians in celestial and human form. This is their splendid discernment which inspired the artisans to delineate such beautiful motifs in their paintings with stunning landscapes. Besides this, landscape has exhibited the topographical rank. The vegetation of every place has its own distinctive qualities owing to different geographical situations. The artists have represented vegetation as per the ecological impact of area. This specific depiction of vegetation by the painter in these paintings is the forte of these paintings. It is only in Indian art where painting music and poetry have been proffered in such a composite and unmitigated way that it becomes a fabulous presentation of Indian painting.

KEYWORDS: Rajasthani art, Landscape painting, *Baramasa* themes, *Ragamala* Themes, Hindu Literature.

INTRODUCTION:

The indigenous Rajasthani miniature School of painting was flourishing simultaneously along with the Mughal School of art. Although it is believed that it had its origin in the 16th C.A.D., yet it reached its zenith in the middle of 17th C.A.D. (Rowland, 1977). Dr. Coomarswamy has divided the Indian miniature painting into two parts. One being the Mughal School which was the foreign Mohammedan school established in India from Persian paintings and the second the Rajput school, which was totally native and had evolved in Rajasthan and the Himalayas (Smith, 1969). The Muslim ingress in India showed transmogrification everywhere. Later the Rajputs prospered a lot during the 16th C.A.D. and several Rajputs joined the Mughal court. Mughal and Indian art had an overt intensive mutual influence due to treaty amid the Hindus and Muslims. Gradually Rajputs or Rajasthani art got complete emancipation from Mughal art by the end of 16th C.A.D. Then this art form became a pure Hindu idiom (Chawla and Chawla). This miniature form thus got the momentum due to its beautiful depiction of Hindu religious literature in which execution of landscape or vegetation played a very significant role.

Islamic intromission in India had actually caused a huge damage to medieval Hindu kingdom's culture and convention. Eventually the efforts of intelligentsia bore fruit and the native literature once again allied with the mainstream literature leading to the resurrection of Hinduism. Consequently Hinduism once again gained eminence and became a prominent cult everywhere. Vaishnava sect gained momentum and people concentrated more on worshipping Rama and Krishna. In all kind of arts forms like theatre, dance, music, poetry and painting Rama and Krishna became pivotal characters (Cravan, 1995). So we can call Rajasthani art, a rectified form of Indian tradition.

Mughal art which was coeval of Rajasthani art was considered modern art as it delineated court and royal life in their miniature paintings where as Rajasthani art was based on Indian saga, romantic Vaishnava literature, and musical mode which was completely rooted in Indian classical folk or convention. The paintings of this school were also related to native literature. Rajasthani art emerged as an amalgamation of folk art with conventional and canonical ethos. In the late 16th century the expansion of Vaishnavism overlapped the investiture of Rajasthani painting and the renaissance of Hindu literature. There is not much dissimilarity amidst the technique of classical wall painting and Rajasthani miniature art. The only distinction lies in painting surfaces. Along with the prolongation of classical strategy the Rajasthani School carried on several themes and the discourse of the ancient school. Rajasthani paintings also become illustrious for its motifs like *Raga Ragini*, *Baramasa*, *Nayak Nayika Bheda* (Rowland, 1977).

India has various seasons. Each and every season has its own festivals. The delineation of seasons has been a comely and alluring theme for the Indian writers and poets. The most among these subject matters has been *Baramasa* based on different seasons in twelfth months. The poets have composed beautiful literary pieces based on *Baramasa* which mesmerized the readers. This beautiful

literary work *Baramasa* was composed by 16th century poet Keshavdas. He has described the festivals, rituals, ceremonies and human life in his poetry during the period of 12 months related to different seasons (Brijbhushan, 1979). These native songs were well renowned in 11th century in northern India. These songs have delineated love and parting as per the twelve months of the year (Gray, 1948). As a matter of fact *Baramasa* is based on the subject matter of irreligious and non ritual subject matter. The artist has aesthetically delineated sentiments of lovers by fusing them with natural beauty of every month. The meeting and separation of lovers has also been portrayed artistically. The métier of *Baramasa* motifs is the beloved's fondness for her lover or husband. She doesn't want to be separated from her lover in any season as every single season has its own significance (www.artindia.com).

Actually male members of the family had to go for their earnings for quite a longer time, the beloved could not bear this separation. Her pining for her lover has been captured aesthetically by the poets. The delineation of landscape in *Baramasa* painting has played a significant role in portrayal of loved separation. The vegetation of every season and place has its own distinctive qualities owing to different geographical situations. The artists have represented vegetation as per the ecological impact of area. This specific depiction of vegetation by the painter in these paintings is the forte of these paintings.

Every season has been delineated with its own specific features. In spring season the earth is adorned with yellow mustard flowers, trees and forests are embellished with red orange flowers. Adorning earth with vibrant flower has enhanced the earnestness and romanticism of the spring season. The lovers have been depicted smearing each other with colours in the festival of Holi, the main fiesta of spring season on a very realistic manner. The spring season followed by summer season with its own precise flowers, fruits and vegetation. The scorching heat of this season forces everyone including birds and animals inside their dwellings. The desiccation and the sultriness of the summer have been portrayed artistically. Summer is followed by the rainy season which is the favourite season of the literati and the artists. The rainy seasons compels all the living beings to come out and revels in the rain. It is the favourite seasons of the lovers too. Kalidas the great poet has given a phenomenal portrayal of the rainy season. The lonely wife yearning for her husband's company tells to black clouds to go and fetch her husband as she doesn't want to relish the delectation of the rainy season all alone (Brijbhushan, 1979).

The clouds laden with rain, the depiction of raindrops makes the greenery all the more evident. In such a depiction both the folk touch and the customary manner have played a major role. Mughal art or foreign art could not cast a shadow on this style. The dark grey clouds, the trees laden with flowers and fruits are an alibi of these beautiful seasons and which has been a unique feature of Rajasthani School of painters. The blending of motifs along with topography and environmental aspects is the prime characteristic feature of Rajasthani Painting (Sivaramamurti, 1970).

Rainy season is followed by two major Indian festivals Dusshera and Diwali. Diwali is a festival of lights, crackers and glimmer. The artists have delineated light in pitch dark night very technically. The arrival of winter season begins with its pristine flowers and crops. Basking in the sun sitting around the bonfire, once again brings in life indoors. The painters have uniquely presented in winter vegetation along with golden sunshine aesthetically (Brijbhushan, 1979). In this way the depiction of various seasons was enhanced by aesthetic delineation of diverse landscapes which further augmented the beauty of *Baramasa* series. Lord Krishna plays a significant role in *Baramasa* series. The human beings and animals mesmerized by Krishna's divine presence would have appeared incomplete without the communion of the landscape (Sivaramamurti, 1970). The diverse pictorial depiction of day and night the vegetation of hilly areas, the clouds, the rain and the lighting enhanced the aesthetic sense of the paintings and were an integral part of Indian tradition (Coomaraswamy, 1966).

Rajasthani School of art never had any new or foreign elements rather it was closely related to classical art of Ajanta. As Hindu language and literature are related to *Prakrits* and Sanskrit similarly this art was inspired the native primeval classical art. As a matter of fact folk idioms of this art were blended with antique hieratic design. Consequently the nature was very amiable in this form of art. It seems as if human soul resides in it (Coomaraswamy, 1912).

The artists have worked like proletarian for the common people. This art form is called folk art because these artisans mastered it through the local expression without any authoritative supervision and painted using the classical style of art form (Chawla and Chawla). Another favored subject rather for these artisans has been *Ragamala*. *Ragamala* means a garland of Raga, a garland of melodies. Actually fusion of *Ragas* and *Raginis* create *Ragamala*. *Raga* means that tint which binds the mind with sentiments and desires. *Ragamala* painting is a quintessence and solitary exemplification. There are 6 *Ragas* and each *Raga* has 5 consorts. Together they are 36 in number. Each *Raga* and *Ragini* is related to specific time period during day and night as well to specific season (Craven, 1995, A.K.C., 1918).

The prime *Ragas* are *Bhairava*, *Dipika*, *Sri*, *Malkauns*, *Megha* and *Hindola*. These are sung in six different seasons like summer time, rainy season, autumn, early winter, winter and spring. *Ragamala* is a visual ocular denotation of Indian classical modes which were initially proffered by the poets and musicians in celestial and human form. This is their splendid discernment which inspired the artisans to delineate such beautiful motifs in their paintings. These paintings were created in albums containing 36 to 42 folios and have been organized in a familial unit. Each unit is headed by a male *Raga* having 5 to 6 consorts. Some of them even have *Ragaputra* and *Ragaputris* (sons and their wives) (blog.artoflegendindia.com).

Each *Raga* and *Ragini* has its own philosophical characteristic features and kinship and it is an incredible feat of Indian music. The descriptions of theme of music, poems and paintings have a deep impact on human psyche as they are instantaneously linked with human consciousness. Through these art forms man gets an acquaintance with the beautiful world and incompletely captivated by it as these art forms take him in to the world of fantasy where he can forget his life's daily grind and where art forms had taken from artisans' discernment (Coomaraswamy, 1931). It is only in Indian art where painting, music and poetry have been proffered in such a composite and unmitigated way that it becomes a fabulous presentation of Indian painting (Craven, 1995).

These *Ragas* arouse philanthropic emotions of the listener and energize his intellect in an affirmative way (blog.artoflegendindia.com). The prime colours used in these painting are red, yellow, black and dark green and the tones of these colours resemble a lot with the colours used in Ajanta painting. The impact of Ajanta paintings is clearly visible in these painting. *Ragini* Todi has been a prime subject matter of Rajasthani art. In this painting a damsel has been shown playing on a *Veena* amidst thick trees. Fascinated by her alluring music a black buck and fawn have moved quite closer to her. The landscape used in this painting has been the most appropriate and has also added to the impact of the painting (A.K.C., 1918).

One more painting of Todi *Ragini* portrays rainy reason. The trees delineated in vertical setting have added to the substance of the painting. The young Todi is mesmerizing the deer in the forest with her music. The ebullient trees covered with pristine birds and flowers symbolically epitomize. All these beautiful elements ameliorate Todi's youthful radiance (Craven, 1995). There have been more delineations of Todi *Ragini* as compared to the rest of the *Ragas*. Another painting of Todi *Ragini* found in Malwa region, in this painting too, a lady has been shown playing *Veena* and waiting for her lover. The setting of this painting is almost similar to the previous paintings. Todi's music has equally mesmerized both the deer as well as the landscape because the slanting rhythms of the trees give the impression of being captivated by the divine music. Consequently the whole setting is under a musical demeanor. One more *Ragini* *Kedara* is an exemplification of rapport between the beauty of the landscape and the music. In the painting a monk has been represented holding a musical instrument. He is sitting under a pavilion. A pilgrim holding a rosary in his right hand and facing the monk. The whole landscape has become a part of this devout environment. The moon, the stars, the dark sky and even trees have been delineated beautifully

according to the night scene. A tree with white flowers is creating a divine presence. A banana tree has been portrayed as a religious icon. A pond with lotus flowers and the ducks has been proffered as a holy symbol (Deneck, 1984)

Krishna and Radha have been the pivotal characters of this art form. Other dominated subject matters were Lord Krishna and his childhood stories in Mathura. Numerous literary works have been delineated artistically based upon, different Hindu literature. The *Gita Govinda* which was written by Bengali poet Jayadeva in 12th century, the love of Radha Krishna has been delineated aesthetically in this composition. *Nayak Nayika* (hero and heroine) another subject matter of Rajasthani painting also shows love of Radha Krishna. *Bhagwad Purana* has portrayed disparate incarnations of lord Vishnu. *Rasikapriya* was composed by Keshavdas in 1591, a court poet of Orcha (Craven, 1995). *Ramayana* of Tulsidas and *Rasikapriya* of Keshavdas had a mass imploration and a higher charisma. Both these compositions have been a fountain head of motifs of this naive mellifluous enunciation of folk art. Such a beauty had been an integral part of Indian art. The beautiful elements of Rajasthani art (Landscape, vegetation, animals, birds) have enhanced the importance of conventional art as the colours used are dazzling and concordant (Sivaramamurti, 1970).

The beautiful painting from the manuscript of *Ramayana* (*Ayodhya –Kanda*) is the remarkable presentation of landscape. The exclusive forest scene is depicted with red, white, yellow coloured trees and plants and these elements collectively enhancing the thematic value of painting. Whole painting is full of vegetation which creates the authentic ambiance of divine place of Lord Rama and his family (Colour Plate: 2) (Barrett, and Gray, 1978).

Mughal art which dominated the art scenario in India prior to Rajasthani art was a rational art where as Rajput or Rajasthani miniature art was based on Hindu literature imbued with emblems and poetic descriptions. Even the colours have been used symbolically. Each and every colour has its own significance. Some specific *Ragas* were delineated using red colours for fury, yellow for splendid and brown represented the aphrodisiac (Craven, 1995). Great poets like Bakmiki, Vyasa and Kalidasa's *bhava* (expression) have delineated through colours, landscape and the ecological aspects (Sivaramamurti, 1970).

The colours used in the landscape are emblematic, for yellow colour suggests spring season, scarlet stands for love and blue symbolizes the winter season. Every *Raga* is based upon love. As a result it produces an emotive outcome (Chawla and Chawla). Mostly the primary colours have been used by the Rajasthani artists. Each and every theme has been delineated by these artisans in a meaningful way. All the elements of Rajasthani painting like bird, animal, vegetation, pond etc. have not only been used to enrich the context of the subject or to beautify the theme rather they seem to be associated with all themes. Art related to Mewar area under Rajasthani School generally the legend of Lord Krishna has been delineated and the landscape has also been portrayed accordingly. Resonant colours have been used in accordance with the landscape of Mewar. But in some paintings of Bundi region the rows of trees have been painted on the top and it has been a common practice in all these paintings. Perhaps it is due to the geographical and botanical situations of Bundi area. The artisans have captured the exact picture of upper hills of the landscape (Brijbhushan, 1979).

The romantic scenes were replaced by the hunting scenes of Kota painting along with an aesthetic portrayal of forest vegetation. The delineation of thick forests showcases the craftsmanship of the artisans. The life has been executed in these paintings as bright and dynamic. The depiction of forests has been the forte of Kota painting. The artist has expressed the native people's feelings of admiration and wonder in a very realistic manner. These attractive Jungles, full of greenery also create a scary effect where animals roam about freely. The artist has delineated petite human's figures so as to stress upon the gigantic proportion of Jungle (Brijbhushan, 1979). The delineation of plants, ferocious animals, rocks and even the tiny leaves of the trees exhibit the artist's delectation in depicting the intricacies. According to W.G. Archer such a superb presentation of Jungle reminds of the paintings of great French artist Douanier Rousseau (Colour Plate: 1) (Craven, 1995).

Indian art is akin to Chinese and Japanese art as all these art forms are imbued with incorporeal and hypothetical spirit. They are even better than the real. If we view Rajasthani painting from this perspective then it fully applies to this form of art too. *Abhisarika Nayaika* is a fine example of this form of art who is eagerly waiting for her lover in a light drizzle. The splendor of wilderness has been delineated with a dark background. This type of emblematic presentation can't be even delineated through a fabulous realistic painting but it has done so by the deftly skilled Indian artisans (Petrucci, 1916). All elements contribute equally in this kind of delineation because single element can't arouse such feelings in a painting. The depiction of landscape is chiefly responsible for an apt presentation of the theme.

One more example of such a beautiful presentation is Malwa region's painting titled as "Rama lured by Golden Deer" (Chaitanya, 1982). In this painting both Rama and Lakshmana are Chasing a golden deer. The portrayal of vegetation is not as thick as it has been delineated in Kota painting. The artisan has handled the

landscape in a pristine way to end the tedium of landscapes of other regions. Even colours have been used in a disparate manner. The background has been given a red colour with dark lilac trees with pink flowers. The river has been delineated in dark purple on which pink flowers are floating. Ram, Lakshmana and deer have been portrayed in golden colour. The same colour has been repeated in the internal part of the hut which is giving the effect of celestial illumination. The deep red coloured mountains in the background have lent a sanctified effect. The disparate colours have ameliorated the beauty of the subject matter.

Mr. Eric Dickinson who was English professor in government college, Lahore once visited Kishangarh. He got opportunity to admire the beautiful miniature painting of Rajasthani School. He got highly influenced and impressed by the landscape depiction of these paintings. Later he wrote his wonderful experience in poetry which is as follow: (Chaitanya, 1982)

“The world of every day was blotted out as deeper and still more deep I was drawn into that strange exotic paradise of the followers of Vallabha, the devotees of the Radha-Krishna cult. I plunged into immense incense-bearing forests where among the dense foliage echoed the livelong day the cries of the *kokila*, the insistent moan of doves and the mellow fluting of the orioles. The pungent *neem* spreads his branches down, while up aloft, seeming to festoon the tree with the dazzling winking glow of rubies, the scarlet minnevents pause in flight to preen their feathers. And then suddenly on to the enchanted air down the forest aisles are wafted fragments of whispered colloquies of love, the words seeming to evade the strained ear of the devotee, since if he won the secret he would go mad with joy. How glorious then seemed the emprise that might win even some syllable of that enchanting music, that like a fountain, drop by drop, fell upon the air waking a symphony of ecstatic sound! And there in those enchanted forest aisles life itself is conceived as a sort of listening-listening to Music, to the sound of water, to time as it flies” (Chaitanya, 1982).

Each art form excels because of clarity of motifs and presentation created by different elements. Landscapes have been delineated deftly in European art too. But as only a part of background has been shown, it does not have much emblematic and thematic significance. Indian Rajasthani miniature painting is an aesthetic amalgamation of music, poem and painting. Each and every elements of painting has its own substance. These rudiments have not only been used to enhance the beauty of the painting rather they have been delineated in a significant style. If the topography presentation had not been so symbolic and authentic in Rajasthani miniature art, then the concept would not have been so clear in this form of art.



Colour Plate: 2

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Colour Plate: 1